

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JERUSA 01796 011558Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 SSM-03 AF-10 TRSE-00 ACDA-12
EB-08 NSCE-00 ICAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1236
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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FROM EMBASSY TEL AVIV

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, PDEV, IS
SUBJ: PLANS FOR URBAN CENTER AT EFRAT

1. FOR THE PAST WEEK MEDIA HAS BEEN INTERMITTENTLY REPORTING ON PLANS ASSOCIATED WITH CONSTRUCTION OF URBAN CENTER OF EFRAT IN THE VICINITY OF ETZION BLOC. ACCORDING TO HAARETZ (LITANI), HOUSING MINISTER PATT, DIRECTOR-GENERAL AVNI, AND HEAD OF SHAFIR LOCAL COUNSEL MOSKOWITZ DECIDED TO ASK THE ISRAELI LANDS AUTHORITY TO HAND OVER TO THE MINISTRY LAND ACQUIRED IN THE ETZION BLOC VICINITY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TOWN OF EFRAT. LITANI STATED THAT MOSKOWITZ HEADS A GROUP OF FAMILIES FROM THE US AND SOUTH AFRICA WHO PLAN TO SETTLE IN THE ETZION BLOC AND HAVE ALREADY DEPOSITED \$1 MILLION IN A NEW YORK BANK WHICH THEY ARE PREPARED TO HAND OVER TO THE GOI FOR INTERIM FINANCING OF EFRAT. LITANI NOTED
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PAGE 02 JERUSA 01796 011558Z

THAT DURING THE ALIGNMENT GOVERNMENT PERIOD, THE LANDS AUTHORITY AND HOUSING MINISTRY PROPOSED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EFRAT.

2. ACCORDING TO A REPORT BY ISRAELI TELEVISION ON JUNE 28, THE PLANNING BRANCH OF THE DEFENSE MINISTRY HAS APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE THE HANDING OVER OF THE FIRST LAND INTENDED FOR

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EFRAT. MINISTER PATT TOLD THE TV REPORTER THAT AS SOON AS HE GETS EXACT DETAILS FROM THE DEFENSE MINISTRY IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS HIS MINISTRY WILL BEGIN PLANNING AND START CONSTRUCTION AS SOON AS THE END OF THE SUMMER. THE TELEVISION REPORTER ALSO INTERVIEWED MOSKOWITZ WHO REPEATED HIS CLAIM TO HAVE 300 FAMILIES READY TO SETTLE AT EFRAT.

3. POLOFF SPOKE TO THE DIRECTOR OF RURAL BUILDING AND NEW SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION (MARGALIT) IN THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING, WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL URBAN CONSTRUCTION BEYOND GREEN LINE. HE STATED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED NO INSTRUCTIONS WHATSOEVER REGARDING EFRAT AND THAT HE WAS HIMSELF CHECKING TO SEE IF THE MEDIA REPORTS ARE ACCURATE. TO THE BEST OF HIS KNOWLEDGE THERE HAD BEEN NO RECENT GOVERNMENT DECISION ON EFRAT. IN HIS OPINION THE INITIATIVE FOR THIS PROJECT WAS BEING TAKEN BY LOCAL PEOPLE IN THE ETZION BLOC. ACCORDING TO THE HOUSING MINISTRY SPOKESMAN, THE GOVERNMENT SEVERAL MONTHS AGO REAPPROVED THE ALIGNMENT GOVERNMENT'S DECISION IN PRINCIPLE TO BUILD A TOWN AT EFRAT. HE STATED THAT THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING WAS WAITING FOR PLANS TO BEGIN THIS PROJECT. HE OFFERED ASSESSMENT THAT NOTHING WOULD BE DONE ON EFRAT UNTIL DECEMBER OR JANUARY.

4. COMMENT: WE NOTE THAT EFRAT IS ONE OF THE SIX URBAN CENTERS PROPOSED BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE IN THEIR RECENT PRESENTATION TO SHARON'S MINISTERIAL SETTLEMENT COMMITTEE. WE DO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 JERUSA 01796 011558Z

NOT HAVE A PRECISE FIX ON THE PLANNED LOCATION OF EFRAT BUT IT WILL BE IN THE VICINITY OF THE ETZION BLOC. CONGEN JERUSALEM WILL DO RECON OF AREA IN NEAR FUTURE.
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